



# Rhode Island Department of Human Services

## Early Educator Pandemic Retention Bonus

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Updated 3/28/2022

*Q: Am I eligible to receive this bonus?*

A: To be eligible to receive this bonus, an applicant must be:

- An active full-time or part-time employee of a DHS-licensed child care program
- Providing direct care to children during some portion of the average day of operation
- Employed for at least 6 consecutive months at the same DHS-licensed program by: December 1, 2021 in Application Window #1 and/or June 1, 2022 in Application Window #2

*Q: When do I apply?*

A: The table below summarizes the application window time periods and eligibility criteria:

Window	Timeline	Funding Amount	Eligibility Criteria
Application Window #1	March 18, 2022- April 22, 2022	\$1,500.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full-time or part-time employee of a DHS-licensed child care program</li><li>• Providing direct care to children during some portion of the average day of operation</li><li>• Employed for at least 6 consecutive months at the same DHS-licensed program by <b>December 1, 2021</b></li></ul>
Application Window #2	June 1, 2022- June 30, 2022	\$1,500.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full-time or part-time employee of a DHS-licensed child care program</li><li>• Providing direct care to children during some portion of the average day of operation</li><li>• Employed for at least 6 consecutive months at the same DHS-licensed program by <b>June 1, 2022</b></li></ul>

*Q: How do I apply?*

A: Applying for this bonus is a two-step process:

- **Step One: Submit an Eligibility Form**
  - **How to access:** The link to the Eligibility Form will be posted on <http://kids.ri.gov/cabinet/funding-opportunities/>. The form will gather basic information, including your name, email, DHS-licensed program at which you work, and your role. The estimate time required to complete this form is approximately 5 minutes.
  - **Purpose:** This Eligibility Form will be used to verify your employment. Information gathered in this form will be shared by email with your DHS-licensed program employer for verification of your employment. Once verified, you will be emailed the link to the full application.
- **Step Two: Submit Application**
  - **How to access:** The link to the full application will be sent directly to your email (as submitted in the Eligibility Form) from [childcaregrants@pcgus.com](mailto:childcaregrants@pcgus.com). Additional instructions will be included in this email. The estimated time required to complete this form is approximately 15-20 minutes.



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### *Q: How much money will I receive?*

A: Applicants are eligible to receive up to \$3,000; issued as 2 semiannual bonuses of \$1,500 each, depending on eligibility. Please note, this program is operating on a first-come, first-serve basis.

### *Q: Do I need to pay this money back?*

A: This bonus is funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Fund (SFRF), as appropriated by the Governor and the General Assembly, and as such, do not need to be paid back.

### *Q: What if I need help completing my application?*

A: RI DHS has provided several resources to assist you throughout the application process:

View online resources, including:

- (1) Bonus Program Overview: This document outlines key information about this opportunity.
- (2) Process Guide: How to create an application profile within the online application system
- (3) Application Tips: How to navigate the online application.

**Note:** Links to these online resources are located at <http://kids.ri.gov/cabinet/funding-opportunities/>.

*Watch a webinar.* DHS has developed a brief webinar to guide you through the application process. Webinars will also be posted online at <http://kids.ri.gov/cabinet/funding-opportunities/>.

*Contact us!* Reach out to our team, in English or Spanish, at: [ChildCareGrants@pcgus.com](mailto:ChildCareGrants@pcgus.com) or 833-930-3540 (toll-free call line).

### *Q: How and when will I receive the funding?*

A: There are two payment options: (1) Direct Deposit/ACH, or (2) Paper Check. DHS expects for payments to be made within 30 business days of receipt of a completed application.

Electing to receive funds by check may delay payment up to an additional 30 business days due to processing and mail delivery.

### *Q: Why does my employer need to verify my employment?*

A: The intention of this bonus is to invest in early educators by supplementing educators' compensation to support retention and recruitment in the early learning sector, as well as recognize the vital work that early educators do in supporting the state's littlest learners. Verifying employment is a key step to ensure funds are directed to staff currently in the field.

### *Q: What are the tax implications of these bonuses?*

A: Bonuses will be subject to state and federal income tax. In January 2023, bonus recipients will receive a Form 1099-MISC from Public Consulting Group (PCG, the fiscal intermediary disbursing payments), documenting receipt of these funds as income. Bonus recipients are responsible for all tax implications related to receipt of funds. Please consult a tax professional or accountant for more information on how these funds may impact you.



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*Q: Why is the application asking me to submit my Social Security Number?*

A: A Social Security Number (or Tax Identification Number) is required in the application. This information will be used by Public Consulting Group (PCG, the fiscal intermediary disbursing payments) to issue a Form 1099-MISC. This tax form will be issued to all awarded applicants in January 2023, as these funds are considered income by the Internal Revenue Service.

*Q: What are the attestations required by this bonus program?*

A: In the bonus application, applicants are asked to attest (or agree) to several statements including: the accuracy of information provided in the application, how the information in the application may be used by DHS or PCG, and the applicant's understanding of eligibility requirements and financial implications (such as tax implications and eligibility related to income-based assistance programs as these funds are considered income). Additionally, the applicant will attest to the program's intended purpose- to encourage the retention of the child care workforce- and will attest to their intention to remain at their current employer for 6 months following the receipt of funds.

*Q: I worked at multiple child care programs in the last six months. Am I eligible for a pandemic retention bonus?*

A: The bonus is meant to support early educators who what worked and will continue to work at the same employer. Applicants are not eligible for a retention bonus if they have not worked at the same location for at least 6 months as of the eligibility date for each application window (Window #1: December 1, 2021 and Window #2: June 1, 2022).

*Q: My child care program was closed for 2 weeks during the 6-month time frame due to COVID-19. Does that make me ineligible for the bonus?*

A: As you were still employed with the program during the temporary closure due to COVID-19, you would still be considered eligible to apply.

### **For Program Owners, Directors, or Administrators**

*Q: How will my employees find out about the application for this bonus?*

A: The link to the application will be posted on <http://kids.ri.gov/cabinet/funding-opportunities/> beginning March 19, 2022. As an employer, you will also receive an email the day the application goes live, linking to <http://kids.ri.gov/cabinet/funding-opportunities/>. We encourage you to forward this information to your employees.

*Q: I understand that my role as an employer includes receiving employment verification requests for my employees who apply for this bonus. How do I change the point of contact who will verify the employees for staff at my program?*

A: An Employer Contact Verification request was sent to the email on file with DHS for all Child Care Center programs to confirm or update their program's point of contact. You may complete this form by March 16 to update your program's point of contact for this bonus program. If you need the link to be resent to your program, please contact [childcaregrants@pcgus.com](mailto:childcaregrants@pcgus.com). Updating the point of contact on this form will not update any information currently on file with DHS licensing.

*Q: Our program operates based on an academic calendar year, and our employees do not work over the summer. Are they eligible for Application Window #1?*

A. If the employee is typically employed during an academic calendar year, they are eligible for Application Window #1 if they were previously employed during the prior school year (in



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this case, School Year 2020-2021) and have been employed by the program for at least 6 months total, as of 12/1/21.

#### **Staying Alert**

With the influx of federal funds related to COVID-19, many scammers are looking to take advantage of providers by collecting their personal data. Please review the following resources to better identify scamming methods:

- **Government Grant Scams:** This website covers the topics: How Government Grant Scammers Try to Trick you; What to Know About Government Grants; What to do if you Paid a Scammer; and Report Government Grant Scams.  
<https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/government-grant-scams#How%20Governmnet%20Grant%20SCammers%20Try%20To%20Trick%20You>
- **The US Department of Treasury COVID-19 Scams:** This site advises “If you receive calls, emails, or other communications claiming to be from the Treasury Department and offering COVID-19 related grants or stimulus payments in exchange for personal financial information, or an advance fee, or charge of any kind, including the purchase of gift cards, please do not respond. These are scams.” The link provides contact methods to report these scams to the FBI: <https://home.treasury.gov/services/report-fraud-waste-and-abuse/covid-19-scams>

**Please be aware:** All communications related to this program and your application will come from [Childcaregrants@pcgus.com](mailto:Childcaregrants@pcgus.com) and the [Department of Human Services](#). If at any time, you are concerned or unsure if the person contacting you related to this program is acting in good faith, please call our toll-free number **833-930-3540** to confirm the representative is from the Public Consulting Group or the RI Department of Human Services.

**If you have any additional questions or need technical assistance, please contact:**  
[ChildCareGrants@pcgus.com](mailto:ChildCareGrants@pcgus.com) or call our toll-free number **833-930-3540** for assistance in English or Spanish